

AMENDED CLAIM SET

The claims have been amended as set forth in the following listing of the claims:

1.       (Previously Presented)       A paper separator, comprising:  
  
          one or more finger bodies, provided at or near one or more upstream ends in one or more paper transport directions of at least one or more of the paper-separating fingers, and capable of abutting one or more photosensitive bodies  
  
          one or more guide members, provided at or near one or more downstream ends in one or more paper transport directions of at least one of the paper-separating fingers, and capable of touching so as to guide one or more sheets of paper which has or have separated from at least one or more photosensitive bodies; and  
  
          one or more support components pivotably supporting at least one or more of the paper-separating fingers so as to impart one or more restoring forces thereto urging at least one of the paper-separating fingers to, under the force of its own weight, bring at least one or more of the finger bodies into abutting engagement with at least one or more photosensitive bodies, so as to, when at least one of the guide member or members is touching at least one of the sheet or sheets of paper, cause at least one of the finger bodies to at least partially overcome one or more restoring forces produced by the weight of at least a portion of at least one of the paper-separating fingers and back off from at least one or more photosensitive bodies.

2. (Previously Presented) A paper separator according to claim 1 wherein:

at least one of the support component or components is disposed between at least one of the guide member or members and at least one or more of the finger bodies of the paper-separating fingers.

3. (Currently Amended) A paper separator equipped with at least two paper-separating fingers for separating one or more sheets of paper and abutting and/or backed off from one or more photosensitive bodies, the paper separator comprising:

at least two finger bodies, provided at or near one or more upstream ends in one or more paper transport directions of at least two of the paper-separating fingers, and capable of abutting at least one of the photosensitive body or bodies;

one or more guide members, provided at or near one or more downstream ends in one or more paper transport directions of at least two of the paper-separating fingers, and capable of touching so as to guide one or more sheets of paper which has or have separated from at least one of the photosensitive body or bodies; and

one or more support components pivotably supporting at least two of the paper-separating fingers so as to impart one or more restoring forces thereto urging at least one of the paper-separating fingers to, under the force of its own weight, bring at least two of the finger bodies into abutting engagement with at least one of the photosensitive body or bodies, and so as to, when at least one of the guide member or members is touching at least one of the sheet or sheets of paper, cause at least one of the paper-separating fingers to at least partially overcome one or

more restoring forces produced by the weight of at least a portion of at least one of the paper-separating fingers and back off from at least one of the photosensitive body or bodies wherein:

at least two of the paper-separating fingers are arranged alongside at least one of the photosensitive body or bodies in one or more directions perpendicular to one or more paper transport directions, ~~directions~~;

wherein, operations of ~~operations~~ bringing respective finger bodies into and out of abutting engagement with at least one of the photosensitive body or bodies are ~~bodies being~~ carried out independently.

4. (Currently Amended) A paper separator equipped with at least two paper-separating fingers for separating one or more sheets of paper and abutting and/or backed off from one or more photosensitive bodies, the paper separator comprising:

at least two finger bodies, provided at or near one or more upstream ends in one or more paper transport directions of at least two of the paper-separating fingers, and capable of abutting at least one of the photosensitive body or bodies;

one or more guide members, provided at or near one or more downstream ends in one or more paper transport directions of at least two of the paper-separating fingers, and capable of touching so as to guide one or more sheets of paper which has or have separated from at least one of the photosensitive body or bodies; and

one or more support components pivotably supporting at least two of the paper-separating fingers so as to impart one or more restoring forces thereto urging at least one of the paper-separating fingers to, under the force of its own weight, bring at least two of the finger bodies

into abutting engagement with at least one of the photosensitive body or bodies, and so as to, when at least one of the guide member or members is touching at least one of the sheet or sheets of paper, cause at least one of the paper-separating fingers to at least partially overcome one or more restoring forces produced by the weight of at least a portion of at least one of the paper-separating finger fingers and back off from at least one of the photosensitive body or bodies wherein:

at least two of the paper-separating fingers are arranged alongside at least one of the photosensitive body or bodies in one or more directions perpendicular to one or more paper transport directions, ~~directions~~;

wherein, operations of ~~operations~~ bringing respective finger bodies into and out of abutting engagement with at least one of the photosensitive body or bodies are ~~bodies being~~ carried out cooperatively.

5. (Previously Presented) A paper separator according to claim 4 wherein:  
each of at least two of the paper-separating fingers has at least one of the support components; and

operations bringing at least a portion of the finger bodies of the at least two paper-separating fingers into and out of abutting engagement with at least one of the photosensitive body or bodies are carried out in mutual cooperation due to action of one or more shafts mutually connecting at least a portion of the support components of the at least two paper-separating fingers.

6. (Currently Amended) A paper separator according to claim 1 wherein:  
~~a plurality of support components is provided to the support component of the one or~~  
~~more paper-separating fingers is disposed at one or more locations such as will~~ cause at least one  
amount by which at least one of the finger bodies moves in one or more directions of  
engagement with and/or retraction from at least one of the photosensitive body or bodies to be  
less than at least one amount by which at least one of the guide member or members moves when  
it touches at least one of the sheet or sheets of paper.

7. (Previously Presented) A paper separator according to claim 1 wherein:  
at least one of the guide member or members is at least partially formed from at least one  
material of the same charge polarity as that of at least one toner used to develop at least one  
latent electrostatic image on at least one of the photosensitive body or bodies.

8. (Previously Presented) A paper separator according to claim 1 wherein:  
at least one of the paper-separating fingers is at least partially formed from at least one  
material of the same charge polarity as that of at least one toner used to develop at least one  
latent electrostatic image on at least one of the photosensitive body or bodies.

9. (Previously Presented) A paper separator according to claim 1 wherein:  
employed as at least one of the guide member or members there are one or more star-  
ring-type spurs rotatably supported at or near one or more downstream ends in one or more paper  
transport directions of at least one of the paper-separating fingers.

10. (Previously Presented) A paper separator according to claim 1, further comprising:

one or more electrostatic clinging prevention means for, during operations bringing at least one of the finger bodies of at least one of the paper-separating fingers into and out of abutting engagement with at least one of the photosensitive body or bodies, at least partially preventing electrostatic clinging between at least one of the paper-separating fingers and one or more members coming in contact with at least one of the paper-separating fingers.

11. (Previously Presented) A paper separator according to claim 10 wherein:

at least one of the electrostatic clinging prevention means is at least one of the paper-separating fingers, or at least one of the member or members coming in contact with at least one of the paper-separating fingers, or both at least one of the paper-separating fingers and at least one of the member or members coming in contact with at least one of the paper-separating fingers, is or are formed from one or more antistatic materials.

12. (Previously Presented) A paper separator according to claim 10 wherein:

at least one of the electrostatic clinging prevention means is one or more antistatic treatments have been applied to at least one of the paper-separating fingers, or at least one of the member or members coming in contact with at least one of the paper-separating fingers, or both at least one of the paper-separating fingers and at least one of the member or members coming in contact with at least one of the paper-separating fingers.

13. (Previously Presented) A paper separator according to claim 10 wherein:  
at least one of the electrostatic clinging prevention means is at least one surface resistance of at least one of the paper-separating fingers, or at least one of the member or members coming in contact with at least one of the paper-separating fingers, and at least one of the member or members coming in contact with at least one of the paper-separating fingers, is or are set to at least one value which is not more than  $10^{13} \Omega$ .

14. (Previously Presented) A paper separator according to claim 10 wherein:  
at least one of the electrostatic clinging prevention means is one or more charge-removing members are provided in the vicinity or vicinities of one or more regions where at least one of the paper-separating fingers comes in contact with at least one of the member or members coming in contact with at least one of the paper-separating fingers.

15. (Previously Presented) A processor cartridge provided with at least one paper separator according to claim 1 for one or more image forming apparatuses;  
at least one of the paper-separating fingers and at least one of the photosensitive body or bodies being constructed so as to permit installation and removal in integral fashion with respect to at least one of the image forming apparatus or apparatuses.

16. (Previously Presented) A processor cartridge for one or more image forming apparatuses and provided with at least one paper separator according to claim 15;

at least one of the photosensitive body or bodies being constructed so as to permit installation and/or removal thereof with respect to at least one of the paper-separating fingers; and

when at least one of the processor cartridge or cartridges is made to assume at least one orientation permitting installation and/or removal of at least one of the photosensitive body or bodies, at least one of the paper-separating fingers is acted upon by one or more restoring forces produced by the force of its own weight and causing at least one of the finger bodies to back off from at least one of the photosensitive body or bodies.

17. (Currently Amended) A paper separator according to claim 2 wherein:

at least two of the paper-separating fingers are arranged alongside at least one of the photosensitive body or bodies in one or more directions perpendicular to one or more paper transport directions, and directions;

wherein operations for ~~operations~~ bringing respective finger bodies into and out of abutting engagement with at least one of the photosensitive body or bodies are ~~being~~ carried out independently.



18. (Currently Amended) A paper separator according to claim 2 wherein:

at least two of the paper-separating fingers are arranged alongside at least one of the photosensitive body or bodies in one or more directions perpendicular to one or more paper transport directions, and~~directions~~;

wherein, operations of ~~operations~~ bringing respective finger bodies into and out of abutting engagement with at least one of the photosensitive body or bodies are ~~being~~ carried out cooperatively.

19. (Previously Presented) A paper separator according to claim 11 wherein:

at least one of the electrostatic clinging prevention means is the fact that at least one surface resistance of at least one of the paper-separating fingers, or at least one of the member or members coming in contact with at least one of the paper-separating fingers, or both at least one of the paper-separating fingers and at least one of the member or members coming in contact with at least one of the paper-separating fingers, is or are set to at least one value which is not more than  $10^{13} \Omega$ .

20. (Previously Presented) A paper separator according to claim 12 wherein:

at least one of the electrostatic clinging prevention means is at least one surface resistance of at least one or more of the paper-separating fingers, or at least one of the member or members coming in contact with at least one or more of the paper-separating fingers, or both at least one of the paper-separating fingers and at least one of the member or members coming in contact

with at least one of the paper-separating fingers, is or are set to at least one value which is not more than  $10^{13} \Omega$ .

21. (New) A paper separator, comprising:

one or more finger bodies, provided at or near one or more upstream ends in one or more paper transport directions of at least one or more of the paper-separating fingers, and capable of abutting one or more photosensitive bodies

one or more guide members, each adapted to rotate about a rotational shaft fixed to a paper-separating finger, provided at or near one or more downstream ends in one or more paper transport directions of at least one of the paper-separating fingers, and capable of touching so as to guide one or more sheets of paper which has or have separated from at least one or more photosensitive bodies; and

one or more support components pivotably supporting at least one or more of the paper-separating fingers so as to impart one or more restoring forces thereto urging at least one of the paper-separating fingers to, under the force of its own weight, bring at least one or more of the finger bodies into abutting engagement with at least one or more photosensitive bodies, so as to, when at least one of the guide member or members is touching at least one of the sheet or sheets of paper, cause at least one of the finger bodies to at least partially overcome one or more restoring forces produced by the weight of at least a portion of at least one of the paper-separating fingers and back off from at least one or more photosensitive bodies.